

## **Sūrah Muḥammad**

### **Central Theme of the *Sūrah* and the Nature of its Relationship with the Group**

The Makkan *sūrahs* of this group ended on the previous *sūrah*: Sūrah Aḥqāf. The next three *sūrahs* are Madīnan. After Sūrah Aḥqāf, this *sūrah* begins without any introductory passage. It is as if it expresses the practical manifestation of the warning sounded to the disbelievers in the last verse of Sūrah Aḥqāf. Readers have seen that in the previous *sūrahs* it has been explained at length that the evil to support which the Quraysh and its allies are fighting has no basis neither in the world around man and that inside him nor in the established norms of sense and human nature. The history of the prophets as well as divine scriptures are also devoid of it. It is a tree which has shallow roots and has occupied space merely because there is no one to uproot it. Now in this and the next *sūrah*, it has been explained that God has created the means to uproot this evil and that the unassailable verdict of fate has been pronounced as per which all the efforts of the disbelievers which they have launched to stop people from going towards God will end up in vain. At the same time, the believers are given glad tidings that their efforts shall bear fruit not only in this world but also they alone will succeed in the Hereafter on the condition that they come forward to discharge their obligations with full resolve and determination. In this regard, a warning is sounded to the Hypocrites who did lay claim to faith but their sympathies were with the disbelievers. They are informed that if they did not wholly and fully support God and His Prophet (sws) by leaving aside hypocrisy, their fate will be the same as the one that is destined for the disbelievers and the Idolaters.

### **Analysis of the Discourse**

**Verses (1-3):** A declaration of the decision that since the disbelievers have spent all their efforts in following and supporting evil, hence they will end up in vain. On the other hand, since the believers have followed the truth that has come to them from their Lord and have also made many sacrifices in this regard, the Almighty will make their efforts bear fruit both in this world and in the Hereafter.

**Verses (4-12):** The believers are encouraged that if circumstances arise

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that they have to wage war against the disbelievers, they should not be over-awed by them. They are frail and baseless. They should be routed in war. They should be rendered so powerless that they are released from captivity as a favour to them by the Muslims or through ransom. Muslims should remember that God is sufficient to deal with them; He, however, wants to test them and that is why He is directing them to do so. If Muslims come forward to help God, God will help them and their enemies will be humiliated and trounced. History bears witness that before this too God destroyed nations which opposed the truth. The same fate will befall the enemies of the Muslims.

**Verses (13-15):** The pride and conceit which the Quraysh have on their power and might is totally baseless. History bears witness that the Almighty destroyed so many nations who were superior to them in all respects. This is a requisite of God's justice and wisdom. How can those who lead their lives in the light of reason and argument be equal to those who spend their lives while blindly following their desires. It is necessary that their fates be different. The fate of the former is Paradise which will offer various favours to them and that of the latter is Hell which will inflict them with a grievous fate. The atmosphere and surroundings of Paradise and Hell are then depicted.

**Verses (16-19):** A reference is made to the hidden enemy of the Muslims: the Hypocrites. These people do apparently listen to what the Prophet (sws) says but understand nothing. Things which are instrumental in enhancing the faith and piety of the believers are instrumental in enhancing their hypocrisy. They await the time of judgement though after the coming of the Messenger its conditions have been fulfilled. If that time suddenly arrives, then how will they have the chance to benefit from this counsel revealed by God? The Prophet (sws) is directed to seek God's forgiveness for himself and his companions – who knows the punishment could be hovering near.

**Verses (20-31):** The inner personality and clandestine conspiracies of the Hypocrites are referred to: they are men who can only talk; initially, they enthusiastically demanded why the directive of *jihād* is not given to them; however, when this directive was given they were seized by deathly unconsciousness. These people have in fact turned away from religion and have connived with the enemies of Islam. They are assuring these enemies that they will support them. God is well aware of their hypocrisy and their conspiracies. If He wanted, He could have asked their foreheads to bear witness against them and everyone would have recognized them; However, He is granting them respite but will, nevertheless, put them through such tests which will highlight all the evils hidden in them.

**Verses (32-38):** This is the concluding part of the *sūrah* in which the subject with which it began is reminded of. After that, Muslims in general and the Hypocrites in particular are warned to obey every directive of God and His Prophet (sws). If they show slackness in this, their good deeds will bear no fruit. There is no strength left in the disbelievers; so those who are trying to compromise with them are seeking refuge in a frail shelter. Muslims are urged and encouraged to prove equal to the task; they are destined to win; God is with them. They should not desist from spending in the way of God by being lured away by the pleasures of this world. This is not a non-profitable deal. God will reward each and every penny they spend. He is not asking Muslims to spend all their wealth so that they should evade this call. Had He given such a call, people who have hypocrisy and envy in their hearts would have been completely exposed. They should remember that he who is stingy with God is in fact stingy with his own self. God is not in need of anyone. He is self-sufficient. However, people need Him; He is testing them. If they fail in this exam, God will bring others in their place who will not prove to be worthless like them.

### Section I: Verses (1-15)

#### Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
 الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَضَلَّ أَعْمَالَهُمْ (١) وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا  
 الصَّالِحَاتِ وَآمَنُوا بِمَا نُزِّلَ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ كَفَرَ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَأَصْلَحَ  
 بَالَهُمْ (٢) ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا اتَّبَعُوا الْبَاطِلَ وَأَنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّبَعُوا الْحَقَّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ  
 كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ أَمْثَالَهُمْ (٣) فَإِذَا لَقِيتُمْ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَضَرْبِ الرِّقَابِ حَتَّى إِذَا  
 أَتَخْتَمُوهُمْ فَشُدُّوا الْوَتَاقَ فِيمَا مَنَّا بَعْدَ وَإِمَّا فِدَاءً حَتَّى تَضَعَ الْحَرْبُ أَوْزَارَهَا ذَلِكَ وَلَوْ  
 يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ لَا تَنْصَرِفَ مِنْهُمْ وَلَكِنْ لَيَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِبَعْضِ الَّذِيْنَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَلَنْ  
 يُضِلَّ أَعْمَالَهُمْ (٤) سَيَهْدِيَهُمْ وَيُصْلِحُ بَالَهُمْ (٥) وَيَدْخُلُهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ عَرَفَهَا لَهُمْ (٦) يَا أَيُّهَا  
 الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ (٧) وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَتَعَسَا  
 لَهُمْ وَأَضَلَّ أَعْمَالَهُمْ (٨) ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَرِهُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالَهُمْ (٩) أَفَلَمْ

يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ دَمَّرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ أَمْثَالُهَا (١٠) ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ مَوْلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَأَنَّ الْكَافِرِينَ لَا مَوْلَى لَهُمْ (١١) إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدْخِلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَتَمَتَّعُونَ وَيَأْكُلُونَ كَمَا تَأْكُلُ الْأَنْعَامُ وَالنَّارُ مَثْوًى لَهُمْ (١٢) وَكَأَيِّن مِّن قَرْيَةٍ هِيَ أَشَدُّ قُوَّةً مِّن قَرْيَتِكَ الَّتِي أَخْرَجْتَكَ أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ فَلَا نَاصِرَ لَهُمْ (١٣) أَفَمَن كَانَ عَلَى بَيْتَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ كَمَن زُيِّنَ لَهُ سُوءُ عَمَلِهِ وَاتَّبَعُوا أَهْوَاءَهُمْ (١٤) مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وُعدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ فِيهَا أَنْهَارٌ مِّن مَّاءٍ غَيْرِ آسِنٍ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِّن لَّبَنٍ لَّمْ يَتَغَيَّرْ طَعْمُهُ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِّن خَمْرٍ لَّذَّةٍ لِّلشَّارِبِينَ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِّن عَسَلٍ مُّصَفًّى وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا مِن كُل الثَّمَرَاتِ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ كَمَن هُوَ خَالِدٌ فِي النَّارِ وَسُقُوا مَاءً حَمِيمًا فَقَطَّعَ أَمْعَاءَهُمْ (١٥)

God has brought to nothing all the deeds of those who committed disbelief and stopped others from His path. As for those who professed faith and did good deeds and professed faith in what has been revealed to Muhammad – and which is the Truth from their Lord – God forgave them their sins and bettered their state. This was because the disbelievers follow falsehood, while the believers followed the truth that came from their Lord. In this manner, God is citing examples for people. (1-3)

So when you face the disbelievers strike off their heads until when you have routed them, bind them firmly. Then liberate them as a favour or by taking ransom from them until war shall lay down its weapons. This is what you should do. And had God willed, He could have taken revenge from them Himself; but He directed you to do so that He might test one of you by the other. And those who have been slain in the cause of God, He will surely not allow their deeds to go waste. He will guide them to their destination and better their state and will admit them to the Paradise He has made known to them. (4-6)

Believers! If you help God, God will help you and firmly plant your feet. As for those who have disbelieved, they shall be destroyed and God brought their deeds to nothing. This is because they disliked what He revealed to them. So God brought their deeds to nothing. (7-9)

Have they never walked about in the land so that they could see the fate of those before them? God totally destroyed them. And before these disbelievers too are their examples. This is because God is the helper of the believers and the disbelievers have no helper. (10-11)

Indeed, God will admit those who embraced faith and did good deeds to gardens watered by running streams. And the disbelievers, they are

indulging in pleasure and eating as cattle eat. Hell is their abode. (12)

How many settlements are there which were mightier than yours which turned you out? We destroyed them. Thus no one was able to help them. (13)

Can they who are on a clear evidence from their Lord become like those whose evil deeds have been made dear to them and they have followed their desires? Such is the Paradise which the righteous have been promised: therein shall flow rivers of water undefiled, and rivers of milk whose taste will never change and rivers of wine delectable to those who drink it and rivers of pure honey. And there will be fruits of all kinds and also forgiveness from their Lord. Will these people who receive these favours be like those who shall abide in Hell forever, and who will be made to drink boiling water; thus it will tear apart their bowels? (14-15)

### Explanation

الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَضَلَّ أَعْمَالَهُمْ<sup>1</sup>

This *sūrah* has begun without any introductory verses right after the note of warning for the disbelievers on which Sūrah Aḥqāf ended – as if this *sūrah* is the practical manifestation of that warning. The verse says that the deeds of people who disbelieved and debarred people from the path of God have been rendered into nothingness by God. This obviously is a reference to the Idolaters of Arabia. The details of this can be seen in verse twenty five of Sūrah Faṭḥ. The word أَعْمَال (deeds) refers to the efforts undertaken by them to stop people from professing faith and doing good deeds. The word إِضْلَال used here has the same meaning as the word تَضْلِيل used in Sūrah Fīl thus: (١:١٠٥) أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ كَيْدَهُمْ فِي تَضْلِيلٍ (Did We not destroy their scheme? (105:1))

This topic will also be brought up in verse four, thirty two and thirty three of this very *sūrah*.

Here, an important point worthy of note is that though this warning relates to the future because at the time of revelation of this *sūrah* the Quraysh were ruling Makkah yet it is stated in the past tense. I have been pointing out the reason for this at various places in this *tafsīr*: it is as if what has been decided by God and what is bound to happen has already happened because no one can change the decisions of God. In order to express this certainty the promises and threats of the Almighty are mentioned in the Qur'ān in the past tense. This style is present in every

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1. God has brought to nothing all the deeds of those who committed disbelief and stopped others from His path.

language and its advantages are very evident.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَآمَنُوا بِمَا نُزِّلَ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ كَفَّرَ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَأَصْلَحَ بَالَهُمْ<sup>2</sup>

The manner and extent in which warning and threat is sounded to the disbelievers in the previous verse, in the same manner and extent in this verse, believers are given glad tidings of success in both this world and the next. The verse says that God has brushed away the sins of those who professed faith and also did righteous deeds and has set right all their circumstances.

Just as the past tense was employed to express certainty in the warning sounded to the disbelievers, in a similar manner the glad tidings for the believers are expressed in the past tense.

The words *وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَآمَنُوا بِمَا نُزِّلَ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ* of this verse are especially worthy of consideration. It was not merely said that God will deal in this manner with those who professed faith and did righteous deeds; it was further specified that they were the ones who believed in what was revealed to Muḥammad (sws). It was specified still further that now this is the truth from God. This clarification was necessary because in those times a group had come into being which wanted a compromise between Islam and disbelief. Their point of view was that it is not right on the part of the Muslims to insist on their individual status and that they should be flexible and give some room to others as well. There was a group among the People of the Book which would say that they were believers and what difference would it make if they did not profess faith in Muḥammad (sws). The Qur'ān has tried to refute such wrong ideologies in the previous *sūrahs* as well. Here also, the way it has specified the verse has negated this concept. It has emphasized that the only way to faith and guidance is the one to which Muḥammad (sws) is calling people. No other way is acceptable.

The word *بَال* in the expression *وَأَصْلَحَ بَالَهُمْ* is a comprehensive one. It encompasses both the outer and inner circumstances. Thus, this expression would mean that God will set right their inner and outer affairs as well as all those of this world and the next.

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا اتَّبَعُوا الْبَاطِلَ وَأَنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّبَعُوا الْحَقَّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ كَذَلِكَ

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2. As for those who professed faith and did good deeds and professed faith in what has been revealed to Muhammad – and which is the Truth from their Lord – God forgave them their sins and bettered their state.

يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ أَمْثَالَهُمْ<sup>3</sup>

This verse states the reason why the deeds of the disbelievers will end up in vain and why the believers will succeed in their efforts. The verse says that this will happen because the disbelievers followed the evil which Satan taught them, while the believers followed the truth which came to them from their Lord. There is no place for evil in their inner-selves and nature. Its example is that of a bush which, taking advantage of the lack of attention of a farmer, grows of its own accord in his land. If it is not uprooted, it finds firm roots in the ground, and if it is uprooted it can be easily done so. Since now the believers have got up to encounter the disbelievers, it is certain that it will be destroyed. At another place, the words of the Qur'ān are: جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا (81:17) (The truth has come and falsehood has been routed; indeed, falsehood was bound to be routed, (17:81)).

On the other hand, the believers have followed the truth which came to them from their Lord. Stability and strength is the very nature of the truth. The reason for this is that the Creator of this Universe is a truth and He has created this world as a truth. His real temperament is nurturing the truth and not evil and now that the truth has arrived it will destroy this evil which has wrapped itself around the truth like a creeper. It is evident from this that the real power and force is not in the means and resources but the truth itself. If the confrontation is between two evils, the decisive role is played by means and resources but if this is between truth and evil, then the decisive role played by the truth; means and resources will only play a secondary role.

The fate of the believers and disbelievers just spelled out was since at that moment in the form of prediction and had yet to materialize hence the words كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ أَمْثَالَهُمْ refer to it as an example. The word لِلنَّاسِ (for people) here refers to these very believers and disbelievers just mentioned. The implication is that the Almighty has stated the parable of the fate of both these groups and soon this parable will practically manifest itself.

فَإِذَا لَقِيتُمْ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَضَرْبَ الرِّقَابِ حَتَّى إِذَا أَثْنَتُمُوهُمْ فَشُدُّوا الْوَثَاقَ فَإِمَّا مَنًّا  
بَعْدُ وَإِمَّا فِدَاءً حَتَّى تَضَعَ الْحَرْبُ أَوْزَارَهَا ذَلِكَ وَلَوْ يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ لَانْتَصَرَ مِنْهُمْ وَلَكِنْ لِيَبْلُوَ

3. This was because the disbelievers follow falsehood, while the believers followed the truth that came from their Lord. In this manner, God is citing examples for people.

بَعْضَكُمْ بِبَعْضٍ وَالَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَلَنْ يُضِلَّ أَعْمَالَهُمْ (٤)<sup>4</sup>

Muslims are exhorted here that the disbelievers are devoid of the support of the truth; it is as if they are a body without a spinal chord; so when they face the disbelievers in battle, they should totally decimate them; God will make them their prey and an easy target for their swords. In Sūrah Anfāl, the words used are: فَاضْرِبُوا فَوْقَ الْأَعْنَاقِ وَاضْرِبُوا مِنْهُمْ كُلَّ بَنَانٍ (٨:١٢) (Thus strike at their necks and strike off all the joints and the very tips of their fingers! (8:12)).

Consider next the expression: حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَتَحْنَتُوهُمْ فَشُدُّوا الْوَتَاقَ. The word اتَّحَنَّا means to inflict heavy casualties and وَتَاقٌ means “straps meant for fastening”. The implication is that once after inflicting heavy casualties, the disbelievers are routed, Muslims should fasten tight the remaining ones; they will not be able to put up any resistance.

The words فَإِمَّا مَنَّا بَعْدُ وَإِمَّا فِدَاءٌ حَتَّىٰ تَصْعَ الْحَرْبُ أَوْزَارَهَا refer to the fact that after being tied up, if these captives are to be liberated by the Muslims, then they should follow only two options: either as a favour or through ransom, and this dealing should continue with these disbelievers until the will to wage war turns cold in them and they lay down their weapons before the Muslims. At another place, the words used are: وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّىٰ لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ كُلُّهُ لِلَّهِ (٨:٣٩) (And wage war on them until persecution ceases in this land and God's religion shall reign supreme, (8:39)).

It should be kept in mind that as far as the Idolaters of Arabia or in other words the Idolaters of the Ishmaelites are concerned, the Almighty has sent to them a Messenger from amongst themselves and conclusively communicated the truth to them through him. Thus like other non-Muslims they could not be treated with concession of living as *dhimmi*s or *mu'ahids* in an Islamic state or that they be kept as slaves. They had two options only: either to embrace Islam or to face death. I have given the reasons for this in detail in my *tafsir* of Sūrah Tawbah. These captives could be released in ransom for a Muslim captive or in ransom consisting of cash or kind or as a favour without taking any sort of ransom. Similarly, if anyone among them wanted to seek refuge to reflect on his own attitude, he could be granted refuge. However, war

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4. So when you face the disbelievers strike off their heads until when you have routed them, bind them firmly. Then liberate them as a favour or by taking ransom from them until war shall lay down its weapons. This is what you should do. And had God willed, He could have taken revenge from them Himself; but He directed you to do so that He might test one of you by the other. And those who have been slain in the cause of God, He will surely not allow their deeds to go waste.



was to continue with them as a group until the land of Arabia was cleansed of every speck of disbelief and polytheism. The differences of opinion which exist in this issue cause a lot of confusion. I have explained them in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Tawbah. Same is the case with the Idolaters of the Ishmaelites under discussion. Other non-Muslims are not discussed here. In the opinion of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah,<sup>5</sup> the permission to free captives as a favour as in ransom had been revoked in the case of the Idolaters of Arabia; they could either be executed or made slaves. In my view, this part of his view is correct that the concession with the Idolaters of Arabia was time barred and ended on the conquest of Makkah but his view that they can be made slaves is not correct in my view. The Idolaters of Arabia could neither be made slaves nor *dhimīs* nor *mu'āhids*.

In the opinion of Imām Shāfi'ī,<sup>6</sup> the ruler of the Muslims has four options regarding such captives and he can choose either keeping in view the welfare of the Muslims: he can have them executed, make them slaves, free them as favour, free them for ransom. In my opinion, this view of Imām Shāfi'ī is true as far as common non-Muslims are concerned; however, this is not true regarding the Idolaters of Arabia. They could not be made *dhimīs* or slaves. Here, it is not appropriate to delve into the details of this issue. Those who want to study the details should read the chapter *Islāmī riyāsat mayn ghayr muslimu kay huqūq* (Rights of Non-Muslims in an Islamic State) in my book, *Islāmī riyāsat* (Islamic State).<sup>7</sup>

In ذَٰلِكَ وَلَوْ يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ لَانتَصَرْنَا مِنْهُمْ وَلَكِنْ لِّيَبْلُوَ بَعْضَكُمْ بِبَعْضٍ the word ذَٰلِكَ is a substitute of a whole sentence: a few examples of this usage can be seen in the earlier *sūrahs*. Its obvious meaning would be: “this is what you should do,” or “this is what you should strive for,” or “this is what you have been directed to do.” The benefit of such brevity is that it encompasses all these details and at the same time incorporates emphasis in the sentence.

The words وَلَوْ يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ لَانتَصَرْنَا مِنْهُمْ وَلَكِنْ لِّيَبْلُوَ بَعْضَكُمْ بِبَعْضٍ imply that if God is asking the Muslims to wage war against them, then this does not mean that He is dependent on them or others for this task. Had He willed, He would have destroyed them Himself by sending a disaster

5. Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Jaṣṣās, *Ahkām al-Qur'ān*, vol 2 (Beirut: Dār ihyā' al-turāth al-'arabī, 1405 AH), 270-271.

6. Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shafī 'ī, *Kitāb al-umm*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār al-ma'rifah, 1393 AH), 260.

7. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī, *Islāmī riyāsat*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Lahore: Dār al-tazkīr, 2006), 176-227.

from the heavens or from within the earth. Before them, many nations have been destroyed by His torment in the blink of any eye. He could have similarly routed them as well. However, He has asked the Muslims to wage war against these disbelievers to try both them and the disbelievers. As a result of this trial, the zeal and enthusiasm the disbelievers have to support evil will become apparent and the sincerity and commitment to die for the truth Muslims have will also become evident. It will also become apparent as to how many among the Muslims are sincere and righteous and how many have hypocritically joined their ranks for their vested interests.

Here the practice of God should be kept in mind that if very few profess faith in their messenger, He asks the messenger and his companions to migrate and all His rejecters are destroyed through natural disasters; however, if the number professing faith in their messenger is sizeable, then they are directed to wage *jihād* and God avenges the enemy from through their hands. It was this latter situation that arose in case of Muḥammad (sws). Before him too, prophets and messengers waged *jihād*. The Almighty helped Moses and the Israelites against the Pharaoh through a sea-storm. After crossing the river, the Israelites had to wage many battles which became a means of their trial. They could not succeed in most trials for which they had to face punishments as well.

The words وَالَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَلَنْ يُضِلَّ أَعْمَالَهُمْ say that people who are martyred in this *jihād* should rest assured that the Almighty will not let their efforts end up in vain; in fact, He will fully recompense them for their sacrifice. The words فَلَنْ يُضِلَّ أَعْمَالَهُمْ have been said keeping in consideration the view of the Hypocrites whose detailed mention is coming up. Since these people did not believe in the Hereafter, every sacrifice which did not produce immediate reward was to them a non-profitable deal. These words refute this view of theirs. Similarly, when it was said that people who are martyred in the way of God should not be regarded as dead; they are alive, then this too was said to negate their views.

The past tense instead of the future used in وَالَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا is to make these glad tidings extend to people who were martyred in the way of God in the past.

سَيَهْدِيهِمْ وَيُضِلُّهُم بِآلِهِمْ (٥) وَيُدْخِلُهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ عَرَفَهَا لَهُمْ (٦)<sup>8</sup>

What is stated earlier in the negative sense by the words:

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8. He will guide them to their destination and better their state and will admit them to the Paradise He has made known to them.

فَلَنْ يُضِلَّ أَعْمَالَهُمْ is stated here in the positive sense so that what is said becomes clear and reinforced. The verse says that the Almighty will guide them and improve their circumstances. Guidance here refers to guiding and admitting them to the real destination: Paradise. The word “guidance” is used at many places in the Qur’ān in this meaning. Examples can be seen not only in the previous *sūrahs* but also in the coming ones. Concealed in the sentence يُصْلِحُ بِهِمْ are all the details of the successes and accomplishments of the companions of Paradise as mentioned in the Qur’ān. In fact, this sentence bears a very subtle reference to the achievements mentioned by the words: فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُمْ مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ (١٧:٣٢) (Then no one knows what bliss has been kept hidden for him, (32:17)).

The words وَيُدْخِلُهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ represent the detail of the “guidance”: God will admit them to Paradise. About this Paradise, it was said: عَرَفَهَا لَهُمْ ie. God has fully identified Paradise for them. These details were required to dispel the notion that the promise of Paradise was a passing and ambiguous promise and nothing is known of its details. If the promise is ambiguous and details are not known, the weak party always remains uncertain about the reality. In order to shield His creatures from such speculations about Paradise, God has divulged all its details in the Qur’ān, and things which cannot be expressed because of the inability of words to state them are also referred so that people fully rest assured that what they are being promised in lieu of their lives and wealth is not something vague; on the contrary, all its details are known, and not only has God promised to grant all these things but has also committed to add to these favours. Although details about Paradise can be seen at various places in the Qur’ān; however, they are specially mentioned in this *sūrah* (verse 15). It should remain clear that the words عَرَفَهَا لَهُمْ are not mentioned here as an attribute of Paradise; had this been the case the word Paradise would have occurred in the original Arabic as an undefined noun. On the contrary, its status is that of an independent sentence, and this status gives it the meaning that I have referred to earlier.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ (٧) وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَتَعْسًا لَهُمْ وَأَصْلٌ أَعْمَالَهُمْ (٨) ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَرِهُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالَهُمْ (٩)

These verses encourage the Muslims: what they should do is to help

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9. Believers! If you help God, God will help you and firmly plant your feet. As for those who have disbelieved, they shall be destroyed and God will bring their deeds to nothing. This is because they disliked what He revealed to them. So God brought their deeds to nothing.

and support the religion of God; if they come forward with resolve and determination, the rest of the task will be accomplished by their God. He will help them and implant their feet so firmly on the ground that no one will be able to dislodge them. In other words, God only wants them to take the first step in His way. If they do so, then the majesty of God will manifest itself. His help does not come to those who wait for it sitting in their houses; it comes to those who take the initiative and embark upon the job and then wait for God's help.

The words **وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَتَعَسَا لَهُمُ** depict the fate of the disbelievers. For them is the curse of God. All their deeds will end up in vain. Whatever respite they have is to try them and to conclusively communicate the truth to them. If Muslims now gear up to take them to task, they will see that all their efforts will end up in vain. The sentence **فَتَعَسَا لَهُمُ** expresses curse and its use in this manner is common in Arabic.

The words **ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَرِهُوا مَا أُنْزِلَ اللَّهُ فَاحْبَطَ أَعْمَالَهُمْ** relate why these people have become hollow, worthless and accursed: they abhorred the very thing which the Almighty has revealed for their guidance and strongly adhered to religious innovations and erroneous concepts; the result was that the Almighty rendered fruitless all their deeds which they did in their own thinking for the cause of religion. This is a reference to those deeds which were pious but which ended up in vain because of the polytheistic creed they adhered to. The Qur'ān has referred to some of these deeds in Sūrah Tawbah. For example, managing the House of God and serving the needs of the pilgrims. The Idolaters were very proud of these deeds. However, all these deeds proved to hold no weight before God. Only those deeds are acceptable to God which are done on the condition that people do them realizing the fact that God is not in need of pious deeds so that in whatever way a person does them He accepts them as if a favour has been done to Him.

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ دَمَّرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ  
وَاللَّكَافِرِينَ أَمْثَالُهَا (١٠)<sup>10</sup>

This is an expression of sorrow on the thick-headedness and lack of vision of the Idolaters: have these people not roamed about in their land so that they could have observed the fate of nations before them. The Almighty totally routed them. It is evident from the style of the verse that these people did in fact move about in their land and continued to go out

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10. Have they never walked about in the land so that they could see the fate of those before them? God totally destroyed them. And before these disbelievers too are their examples.

for various trade journeys; however, they never observed the cities in a manner that could have made them learn a lesson for they could very well see how settlements where great nations once lived were rendered into deserted lands. This is a reference to the nations whose anecdotes have been related earlier.

The words وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ أَمْثَالُهَا say that these nations should serve as an example to the Quraysh; in other words, if they reached this fate because of their disbelief and deliberate denial, there is no reason that the Quraysh too would not reach the same fate if they also adopted the same attitude. The law of God is the same for all. Readers may look up what I have written while earlier explaining the words: كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ أَمْثَالَهُمْ of verse three.

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ مَوْلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَأَنَّ الْكَافِرِينَ لَا مَوْلَى لَهُمْ (١١)<sup>11</sup>

The implication of this verse is that the real helper and supporter of this universe is God and He is with the believers. So what power can the disbelievers who have no supporters wield. Those whom they are regarding to be their helpers will be of no avail to them, neither in this world nor in the next. In verse three earlier, this subject is discussed in a different style. That too should be kept in consideration.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدْخِلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَتَمَتَّعُونَ وَيَأْكُلُونَ كَمَا تَأْكُلُ الْأَنْعَامُ وَالنَّارُ مَثْوًى لَهُمْ (١٢)<sup>12</sup>

This verse further explains how the deeds of the believers will bear fruit and the deeds of the disbelievers will end up in vain. It also explains why these disbelievers dominantly roam about in this world if their deeds have no worth. The verse says that the Almighty will admit the believers in Paradise watered with streams. As far as these disbelievers are concerned, their abode is Hell. The respite they have been given in this world to make hey should not be regarded by them as something positive for themselves. Their enjoyment and merriment is like that of animals. They are totally foolish and silly and totally unaware of the obligations which God's favours require of them. So they can benefit from these favours for a few days. However, these favours will lead them

11. This is because God is the protector of the believers and the disbelievers have no protector.

12. Indeed, God will admit those who embraced faith and did good deeds to gardens watered by running streams. And the disbelievers, they are indulging in pleasure and eating as cattle eat. Hell is their abode.

to destruction and their final abode is Hell.

وَكَايْنٍ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ هِيَ أَشَدُّ قُوَّةً مِّنْ قَرْيَتِكَ الَّتِي أَخْرَجْتِكَ أَهْلُكُنَاهُمْ فَلَا نَاصِرَ لَهُمْ (١٣)<sup>13</sup>

No one should remain in the misconception that if today the Quraysh wield power and ascendancy and that if they were able to turn out the Prophet (sws) and his companions from Makkah, then who can conquer such powerful people? The verse says that there were many cities greater in grandeur and majesty than that of the Quraysh but God destroyed them and no one was able to help them. This is a reference to the ‘Ād and Thamūd etc whose anecdotes have been cited in the previous *sūrahs* and whose grandeur and majesty the Quraysh fully acknowledged. The expression فَلَا نَاصِرَ لَهُمْ not only refutes the worldly help they trusted and felt pride in but also the help of their self-claimed deities which they thought would help them against God.

أَفَمَن كَانَ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ كَمَن زُيِّنَ لَهُ سُوءُ عَمَلِهِ وَاتَّبَعُوا أَهْوَاءَهُمْ (١٤)<sup>14</sup>

The previous verses portray their worldly fate corroborated through historical examples. This verse portrays their fate in the Hereafter. Human intellect and nature are made to bear witness to it. The verse says that would people who are on a radiant sign from God and walk in its light be equal to those whose misdeeds have been endeared to them and who follow their whims? The implication is that this can never be. This is something absolutely against human intellect and nature. If this happens, then that would mean that this world is meaningless and purposeless and its Creator has created it for His recreation.

The word بَيِّنَةٍ has been explained in detail in Sūrah Yūnus. God has created a conclusive sign within man's nature and has further reinforced it by the radiance of His revelations. Both these combine to make a person's inner-self to be نُورٌ عَلَىٰ نُورٍ (light upon light), as referred to by Sūrah Nūr. The brilliance of this light necessarily manifests in his outer-self. On the contrary, a person who blows out the candle found in his nature also deprives himself from the light provided by divine revelations. The result is that both his inner-self and outer-self are engulfed in pitch darkness. In other words, the verse says that how can the fate of two groups be equal in whose inner and outer selves there is a

13. How many settlements are there which were mightier than yours which turned you out? We destroyed them. Thus no one was able to help them.

14. Can they who are on a clear evidence from their Lord become like those whose evil deeds have been made dear to them and they have followed their desires?

pronounced difference?

If this verse is deliberated upon, a person can see that while mentioning the believers only their inner-selves are referred to; their outer-selves are not; however, in case of the disbelievers, the situation is the opposite. When the voids are filled in the light of this parallel style whose examples I have been giving in this *tafsīr* only then the eloquence of the whole sentence will become evident.

In the verse, for مَنْ the antecedents and verbs are used both in the singular form and the plural form because it can be equally used for the feminine and masculine genders as well as for singular nouns and plural ones.

مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وُعدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ فِيهَا أَنْهَارٌ مِّنْ مَّاءٍ غَيْرِ آسِنٍ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِّنْ لَّيْنٍ لَّمْ يَتَغَيَّرَ طَعْمُهُ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِّنْ حَمَرٍ لَّذَّةٍ لِلشَّارِبِينَ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِّنْ عَسَلٍ مُّصَفًّى وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا مِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ كَمَنْ هُوَ خَالِدٌ فِي النَّارِ وَسُقُوا مَاءً حَمِيمًا فَقَطَّعَ أَمْعَاءُهُمْ<sup>15</sup>

The implication of this verse is that when it is against the norms of sense and human nature that these two groups should reach the same fate, then it is essential that God bless with His mercy the one who led its life in the light of its pure nature and that of divine guidance, and the one who led its life in the light of whims and desires be accordingly punished. Thus both will meet the same fate. God has promised Paradise to His pious people whose parable is thus: it shall have pure and untainted water-canals and springs of milk whose taste will never change; it will also have streams of delicious wine which will not intoxicate its drinkers; similarly, it will have streams of unadulterated honey. Moreover, the dwellers of Paradise will also be given fruits of various kinds and will also be given glad tidings of permanent forgiveness from their Lord. On the other hand, the other group will always dwell in Hell and their very first entertainment will be of such seething water which will slice open their intestines.

Deliberation on this verse will show that the pure and impeccable nature of the favours of Paradise is specially highlighted. This is because

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15. Such is the Paradise which the righteous have been promised: therein shall flow rivers of water undefiled, and rivers of milk whose taste will never change and rivers of wine delectable to those who drink it and rivers of pure honey. And there will be fruits of all kinds and also forgiveness from their Lord. Will these people who receive these favours be like those who shall abide in Hell forever, and who will be made to drink boiling water; thus it will tear apart their bowels?

the fountainhead of all favours is Paradise; however, when we receive them in this world, then since they pass through so many phases and stages, their form changes significantly, and their appearance is also totally distorted. Take, for example, water which is the most common thing. It reaches us after so many stages including the atmosphere, clouds, winds, seas, canals, streams and layers of the earth. Obviously, it is affected by every stage because of which its real taste undergoes a lot of change from its original one found in Paradise.

Similarly, take the example of milk. The stages through which it reaches us are mentioned in the Qur'ān thus: (مِنْ بَيْنِ فَرْثٍ وَدَمٍ ١٦:٦٦) (between the bowels and the blood-streams, (16:66)). One can conclude that how can a favour of Paradise remain in its original form and shape if it reached us after so many steps. For this reason, the milk and honey of this world are as different and distanced from the milk and honey of Paradise as the earth and sky are. We can have a vague idea of the favours of Paradise by viewing the favours of this world and God has blessed us with these favours so that we can have some idea of the real favours through these metaphorical ones, but the relationship between the two is that of reality and metaphor. We should not ignore this relationship.

If one deeply deliberates on the relationship of this verse with verse fourteen, it will become evident that the Almighty will bestow these favours on those of His creatures who keep their nature – which the Almighty has called: (فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا ٣٠:٣٠) (adhere to the nature that God created for mankind to embrace, (30:30)) – cleansed from all kinds of evil and return to their Lord with a sound heart. As far as those people are concerned who become slaves to their desires by distorting their natures, they will have no share in these favours. Whatever benefit they could have from them, they did in this world. In the Hereafter, punishment awaits them – punishment which is the obvious consequence of distorting one's nature.

After understanding the meaning of the verse, let us take a look at its words and at the structure of its sentences. The word آسِنُ is used as an adjective for water whose colour and taste has changed. It should be kept in mind that the disturbance caused in the human body by contaminated water has no remedy.

About milk, it is said: لَمْ يَتَغَيَّرْ طَعْمُهُ (its taste will not change). This refers to that change in taste which results because of its contamination. Since milk is a natural means of sustenance, any disorder in it will produce disorder.

The attribute لَذَّةٌ of حَمْرٍ has an exaggeration and hyperbole in it. It is like saying زَيْدٌ عَدْلٌ (Zayd is justice). The implied meaning is that the



wine will be at the pinnacle of its taste. Those who drink it will neither feel it to be bitter, unpleasant and intoxicating nor will it make them lose their senses.

The adjective مُصَفَّى عَسَل shows that the honey found in this world is nevertheless produced by the bees and which cannot be devoid of their contamination they can cause. The honey of Paradise would be from its real source. No one would be able to censure it in any way.

The words وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ at the end refer to the greatest favour of Paradise. This is because it is the forgiveness of God which will be the reason for all the favours and will open the way to the higher levels of Paradise.

Words to the effect أَفَمَن كَانَ لَهُ مِثْلُ هَذِهِ الْجَنَّةِ are suppressed before كَمَنْ هُوَ because of linguistic indications. Such suppressions are common in interrogative and conditional sentences. Examples can be seen in the *tafsīr* of earlier *sūrahs*.

The words مَاءٌ حَمِيمٌ are mentioned as نُزْلٌ or the very first entertainment for the companions of Hell. The Qur'ān has mentioned at a number of places that the very first entertainment of the companions of Hell will be boiling water; after that, all kinds of torments will engulf them.

## Section II: Verses (16-38)

The succeeding verses are a comment on the attitude of the Hypocrites and this subject continues right to the end of the *sūrah*. They are mentioned here with the same reference as they are mentioned in Sūrah Nisā', Sūrah Mā'idah, Sūrah Anfāl and Sūrah Tawbah as well as other *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān. When Muslims were asked to undertake a big campaign, it became essential that a group lurking among them as their hidden enemy be exposed whose weaknesses as well as connivances could become a danger for the Muslims in the coming phases. This subject is divided into three parts.

First, the Prophet (sws) is informed that there is a group among the Muslims who does listen to what he says, yet understands nothing. These people are waiting for a sign of punishment in order to be convinced of what he is saying; they do not know that the advent of a messenger is a forerunner to punishment for people who do not profess faith in him.

Next, their cowardice is exposed: they zealously express from their tongues their readiness for *jihād*; however, now when they have been directed in explicit terms to undertake it, they are engulfed with the fear of death. These people have in fact turned away from religion and have their association with the enemies of God. God has now decided that He

will reveal their weakness and hypocrisy through trials and tests.

Lastly, what is discussed at the beginning of the *sūrah* is brought up again and Muslims in general and Hypocrites in particular are told that they should not try to find support of people who are destined to be doomed; now instead of thinking of ways and means to strike a compromise with them, they should get ready to struggle for the supremacy of religion. God will grant them success. If they turn away from God by being caught in the love of this world, God has no concern for them. He will bring forth others in their place who will not be cowards and hypocrites like them.

Readers may now proceed to read these verses.

### Text and Translation

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّن يَسْتَمِعُ إِلَيْكَ حَتَّى إِذَا خَرَجُوا مِنْ عِنْدِكَ قَالُوا لِلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ مَاذَا قَالَ آنِفًا  
أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَاتَّبَعُوا أَهْوَاءَهُمْ (١٦) وَالَّذِينَ اهْتَدَوْا زَادَهُمْ هُدًى  
وَاتَّاهُمْ تَقْوَاهُمْ (١٧) فَهَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا السَّاعَةَ أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمْ بَغْتَةً فَقَدْ جَاءَ أَشْرَاطُهَا فَأَنَّى  
لَهُمْ إِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ ذِكْرَاهُمْ (١٨) فَاعْلَمَ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاسْتَغْفِرُ لِذَنْبِكَ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ  
وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مُتَقَلَّبَكُمْ وَمَثْوَاكُمْ (١٩) وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَتْ سُورَةٌ  
فَإِذَا أُنزِلَتْ سُورَةٌ تُحْكَمُ فِيهَا الْقِتَالُ رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَيْكَ  
نَظَرَ الْمَغْشِيِّ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ فَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ (٢٠) طَاعَةٌ وَقَوْلٌ مَّعْرُوفٌ فَإِذَا عَزَمَ الْأَمْرُ فَلَوْ  
صَدَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ (٢١) فَهَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ أَنْ تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَتَقَطَّعُوا  
أَرْحَامَكُمْ (٢٢) أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ فَأَصَمَّهُمْ وَأَعَمَّى أَبْصَارَهُمْ (٢٣) أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ  
الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا (٢٤) إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ارْتَدُّوا عَلَى أَدْبَارِهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ  
الْهُدَى الشَّيْطَانُ سَوَّلَ لَهُمْ وَأَمْلَى لَهُمْ (٢٥) ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا لِلَّذِينَ كَرِهُوا مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ  
سَنْطِيعُكُمْ فِي بَعْضِ الْأَمْرِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِسْرَارَهُمْ (٢٦) فَكَيْفَ إِذَا تَوَفَّتْهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ  
يَضْرِبُونَ وُجُوهَهُمْ وَأَدْبَارَهُمْ (٢٧) ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ اتَّبَعُوا مَا أَصْحَبَ اللَّهُ وَكَرِهُوا رِضْوَانَهُ  
فَأَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالَهُمْ (٢٨) أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ أَنْ لَنْ يُخْرِجَ اللَّهُ أَضْعَانَهُمْ  
(٢٩) وَلَوْ نَشَاءُ لَأَرَيْنَاكُمُ فَلَعَرَفْتُمُ بِسِمَاهُمْ وَلَتَعْرِفْتُهُمْ فِي لَحْنِ الْقَوْلِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ  
أَعْمَالَكُمْ (٣٠) وَلَتَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ حَتَّى نَعْلَمَ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَتَبْلُوَ أَخْبَارَكُمْ  
(٣١) إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَشَاقُّوا الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ

الْهُدَى لَنْ يَضُرُّوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَسَيُحِطُّ أَعْمَالَهُمْ (٣٢) يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَلَا تُبْطِلُوا أَعْمَالَكُمْ (٣٣) إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ مَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ فَلَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ (٣٤) فَلَا تَهِنُوا وَتَدْعُوا إِلَى السَّلَامِ وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ وَاللَّهُ مَعَكُمْ وَلَنْ يَتَرَكَمُ أَعْمَالَكُمْ (٣٥) إِنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌّ وَلَهُوَ وَإِنْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا يُؤْتِكُمْ أَجْرَكُمْ وَلَا يَسْأَلْكُمْ أَمْوَالَكُمْ (٣٦) إِنْ يَسْأَلْكُمْوهَا فَيُخْفِكُمْ تَبَخَّلُوا وَيُخْرِجْ أَضْعَانَكُمْ (٣٧) هَآأَنْتُمْ هَؤُلَاءِ تُدْعَوْنَ لِتُنفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَمِنْكُمْ مَنْ يَبْخُلُ وَمَنْ يَبْخُلْ فَإِنَّمَا يَبْخُلْ عَنِ نَفْسِهِ وَاللَّهُ الْغَنِيُّ وَأَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ وَإِنْ تَتَوَلَّوْا يَسْتَبْدِلْ قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُونُوا أَمْثَالَكُمْ (٣٨)

And some of them indeed listen to you, but as soon as they leave your presence, they ask those endowed with knowledge: "What did he just say?" It is these people whose hearts have been sealed by God, and who have followed their base desires. And as for those who follow the path of guidance, God increased their guidance and granted them their share of piety. (16-17)

These people are only waiting for the Hour of Doom to suddenly overtake them? So they should keep in mind that its portents have already come. So when that Hour will come, what chance will they have of being reminded? So you should know that there is no deity but God. And seek forgiveness for the blemishes of believing men and believing women. And God knows the places where you come and go and the places where you reside. (18-19)

And those who have professed faith say: "Why is not a *sūrah* [regarding *jihad*] revealed!" But when a clear *sūrah* was revealed and *jihad* was also mentioned in it, you see those inflicted with a malady in their hearts staring at you as though they are fainting away for fear of death. So pity be on them! For them, the best attitude was obedience and the customary word. So when the matter had been decided with certainty, then if they had been true to God, it would have been better for them. Therefore, if you turned away, what else is expected from you than spreading disorder in the land and severing blood relationships. It is these people who have been cursed by God; thus He made their ears dumb and eyes blind. Do they not ponder on the Qur'ān or are there locks upon their hearts? Indeed, people who turned away once God's guidance was revealed to them were deceived by Satan and God gave them respite. This happened because they said to those who detested what was revealed by God. They said: "We shall follow you in some

affairs.” And God knows this secret of theirs. So what will happen when the angels will claim their souls, striking their faces and their backs? This will be because they followed what incurred the wrath of God and hated what pleased Him. So God brought their deeds to nothing. (20-28)

Do these people in whose hearts is a malady think that God will never reveal their malice? And if We pleased, We would have them pointed out to you and you would recognize them by their looks. And you will surely know them from the hesitation of their words. And God has knowledge of your deeds. (29-30)

And We shall definitely put you to test to distinguish the valiant and the resolute among you and test your circumstances. Those who disbelieved and debarred others from the path of God and opposed the Messenger after they had been clearly guided shall in no way harm God. And God will bring their deeds to nothing. (31-32)

Believers! Obey God and obey the Messenger, and do not let your labours come to nothing. Indeed, those who disbelieved and debarred others from the path of God and died in this state, God shall never forgive them. So do not be feeble and call for a compromise and you will remain dominant and God is on your side and will not show any dishonesty with you in your deeds. (33-35)

The life of this world is but a sport and entertainment. And if you profess faith and be pious, God will reward you and will not ask for all your wealth. And if He demands and demands all, you would show stinginess and this would reveal your malice. Listen up! You are those who when called to spend for the cause of God, there are some among you are stingy. And he who is stingy should remember that he is stingy to himself. God does not need you, but you need Him. And if you turn away, He will replace you by others; then they shall not be like yourselves. (36-38)

### Explanation

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَسْتَمِعُ إِلَيْكَ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا خَرَجُوا مِنْ عِنْدِكَ قَالُوا لِلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ مَاذَا قَالَ أَنِفًا  
أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَاتَّبَعُوا أَهْوَاءَهُمْ<sup>16</sup>

The Prophet (sws) is asked to beware of people who apparently were with the Muslims, yet all their sympathies were with the enemies of Islam. The need for this arose because Muslims could be harmed the

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16. And some of them indeed listen to you, but as soon as they leave your presence, they ask those endowed with knowledge: “What did he just say?” It is these people whose hearts have been sealed by God, and who have followed their base desires.

most by these people in the campaign they had been asked to undertake in the previous verses. The verse says that there is group among them who tries to hear what the Prophet (sws) says, yet understands nothing. For when these people disburse from his presence, they ask from other knowledgeable people of the gathering what the Prophet (sws) had said.

The antecedent of the pronoun in مِنْهُمْ are those referred to earlier by the words كَرِهُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ. The implication is that one group does not even come near the Prophet (sws) because of abhorrence for what has been revealed by God, and another one among them comes to him but not to listen and to understand; only to display its hypocrisy.

By the question مَادَا قَالْ أَيْنَا they want to give the impression to the people that as far as hearing the Prophet (sws) is concerned, they have fully heard what he has said and are also ready to follow it with the readiness of head and heart; however, as yet they have not been able to understand what the Prophet (sws) wants to convey to them. In this manner, they would try to hide their hypocrisy.

The second impression that they wanted to give was that what the Prophet (sws) was conversing about are not things which should be believed into without deliberation; they need deep deliberation and reflection. In other words, by this comment they would insinuate agony for the Muslims who would believe and show conviction in everything related to them by the Prophet (sws); their comment implied that Muslims were accepting what the Prophet (sws) is telling them because they are simpletons and that they in spite of listening very intently to him are unable to understand what he says. It may be kept in mind that this attitude is very effective in undermining the best of words said. For a similar objective, when a *sūrah* would be revealed and the Prophet (sws) would recite it to these Hypocrites, at times, they would sarcastically comment after leaving the Prophet's presence: Speak up! Whose faith has been revived by this *sūrah*? In Sūrah Tawbah, this prank of theirs is mentioned in the following words:

وَإِذَا مَا أَنْزَلَتْ سُورَةً فَمِنْهُمْ مَن يَقُولُ أَيُّكُمْ زَادَتْهُ هَذِهِ إِيمَانًا فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَرَزَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَهُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَتْهُمْ رِجْسًا إِلَى رِجْسِهِمْ وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ (٩: ١٢٤-١٢٥)

And whenever a *sūrah* is revealed, some of them ask: "Whose faith will this increase?" It will surely increase the believers' faith and give them joy. As for those whose hearts are tainted, it will add uncleanness to their uncleanness, so that they shall die while still in disbelief. (9:124-125)

The words *أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ طَعَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَاتَّبَعُوا أَهْوَاءَهُمْ* say that it is these people whose hearts have been sealed by the Almighty and they have followed their base desires. This is a reference to verse fourteen *كَمَنْ زُيِّنَ لَهُ سُوءُ عَمَلِهِ وَاتَّبَعُوا أَهْوَاءَهُمْ* that their misdeeds have been endeared to them and they have become the followers of their base desires; so they will now face the same fate as has been destined for such people. Such people deprive themselves of the light of vision which the Almighty has innately blessed man with and for this reason, they remain deprived of the light of divine revelation and their hearts are sealed because of their misdeeds.

*وَالَّذِينَ اهْتَدَوْا زَادَهُمْ هُدًى وَآتَاهُمْ تَقْوَاهُمْ* (١٧)<sup>17</sup>

This is the same subject as is discussed in the afore-mentioned verse of Sūrah Tawbah: God, through His companionship of His Prophet (sws), increased such people in guidance as had kept intact the innate light found in their nature and also protected it. He blessed the quality of virtue found in them in accordance with their ability and desire to attain it. As far as those people are concerned who nurtured hypocrisy in them, whatever innate ability they had was also confiscated from them.

*فَهَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا السَّاعَةَ أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمْ بَغْتَةً فَقَدْ جَاءَ أَشْرَاطُهَا فَأَنَّى لَهُمْ إِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ ذِكْرَاهُمْ* (١٨)<sup>18</sup>

The verse says that if they are not being able to understand what the Prophet (sws) is telling them, then this only means that these people are only waiting for the hour of judgement that it suddenly overtake them. The word “hour” can refer to both the Day of Judgement and as well as to the decisive punishment which necessarily visits a messenger’s immediate addressees if they intentionally reject him. The messengers of God inform their people of both types of punishments and the one is related to the other as a prelude is to its culmination. The implication is that God was gracious enough to them to warn them of the danger by sending a messenger to them and also revealed His book to them so that when the hour of judgement arrives, they are not able to say that no

17. And as for those who follow the path of guidance, God increased their guidance and granted them their share of piety.

18. These people are only waiting for the Hour of Doom to suddenly overtake them? So they should keep in mind that its portents have already come. So when that Hour will come, what chance will they have of being reminded?

warner came to them. However, they are deliberately trying to pose as unaware to this; if they are posing so, then let them be, for God sends His messenger to convey the truth to the extent that no one is left with an excuse to deny it. If they do not open their ears through his reminders, then the final thing is punishment and the Day of Judgement; now they will face them; if they are not duly honouring these beforehand reminders, then this only means that they want that it suddenly come upon them.

The words *فَقَدْ جَاءَ أَشْرَاطُهَا* imply that if they are waiting for the punishment to arrive, then they should know that its signs have already manifested themselves. This is a reference to the practice of God explained in the previous *sūrahs*: The Almighty does not send His decisive punishment to a people unless He sends His messenger to their central city. This has now happened. God is now observing what attitude people are adopting towards their messenger. Whatever these people have done till now deserves punishment; however, God is giving them respite; if anyone wants to mend his ways, he has this opportunity.

If even now people do not take heed, then the law of God will manifest itself: God will separate His pious people and will destroy those adamant on rebelliousness and anarchy. The signs of this fate are manifesting themselves now both in the world within men and that around them; in the time to come, they will become even more discernable. The time will come when the court of justice will be set up in this world for both the believers and the disbelievers; this lesser court of justice will become a prelude to the greater court of justice that will be set up in the Hereafter. This is what will happen after the advent of the last Messenger and his conclusive communication of the truth. Thus, in certain narratives, the Prophet (sws) has referred to this by raising his two fingers; he is reported to have said that just as these two fingers are adjacent to one another, in a similar manner his advent and the Day of Judgement are very close to one another.<sup>19</sup>

In the sentence, *فَأَنَّى لَهُمْ إِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ ذِكْرَاهُمْ* the subject of the verb *جَاءَتْ* is *السَّاعَةُ* which is mentioned earlier. In other words, if these people are waiting for the judgement hour to profess faith in the Messenger, then whether that hour manifests in the form of punishment or the Day of Judgement, in both cases what chance will they have to heed the reminder? The only time to benefit from this reminder is before their arrival. Once it arrives, their professing faith will be absolutely useless.

19. See, for example: Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 4, 1881, (no. 4652).

فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنْبِكَ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مُتَقَلَّبَكُمْ  
وَمَثْوَاكُمْ (١٩)<sup>20</sup>

This is a reference to the fact that now when the hour of judgement is about to arrive, they should fully comprehend that there is no god but God. People who have no fear of God on the basis of their alleged deities will come to fully realize by that time that no one is there to help them against God.

The words *وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنْبِكَ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ* direct the Prophet (sws) to prepare to protect himself from calamities of that day: people who have no fear of them should be left to themselves; he should keep asking the forgiveness of God for his blemishes and for that of the believers.

This address to the Prophet (sws) is in his capacity of the representative and intercessor of his people. The Messenger of God continuously while bearing the burden of all his associates whether men or women keeps asking for God's forgiveness for himself and for them. He was directed to do so with more diligence so that when the hour of judgement comes, the believers are protected from its calamities.

Here the ascription of sin to the Prophet (sws) in the first place is as a representative of the whole *ummah*, as referred to earlier and not directly towards him. In the second place, the blemishes of the Prophets of God do not emanate from base desires; their blemishes emanate from being over zealous for the cause of truth. I have already explained this at an appropriate place in this *tafsīr*. Such excesses in themselves are not sins; however, since the prophets and messengers of God are standards of truth and falsehood, the Almighty checks them even for such blemishes and reforms them.

The word *مُتَقَلَّبَكُمْ* can be a verbal noun and can also be an adverb of place. I have interpreted it in the latter sense because it is used in contrast with *مَثْوَى*. It would thus refer to a place where people come and go.

This is an assurance of protection sounded to the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims: if they continue to seek forgiveness from God, He will protect them wherever they are; He knows full well the places they frequent and as well as their abodes. There is no fear for them to encounter torment.

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَتْ سُورَةٌ فَإِذَا أُنْزِلَتْ سُورَةٌ مُحْكَمَةٌ وَذُكِرَ فِيهَا الْقِتَالُ رَأَيْتَ

20. So you should know that there is no deity but God. And seek forgiveness for the blemishes of believing men and believing women. And God knows the places where you come and go and the places where you reside.



الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَيْكَ نَظَرَ الْمَغْشِيِّ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ فَأَوْلى لَهُمْ<sup>21</sup> (٢٠)

This is a reference to the attitude adopted by the Hypocrites when they heard the clear directive of *jihad* as mentioned in verse four of this *sūrah*. It is said that first these people who vehemently bluff their claim to faith would come forward and demand that why is not a clear directive about *jihad* being revealed, but when a *sūrah* containing an explicit directive of *jihad* was revealed then those in whose hearts is the malady of jealousy and hypocrisy look towards the Prophet (sws) as if they are facing the stupor of death.

There is an incomplete verb suppressed before يَقُولُ as per linguistic principles. Keeping this aspect in view, the translation of this verb would be: “they used to say”.

The verb in الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا refers to a claim to what is expressed by the verb, and this usage is very common in Arabic. Consider, for example: يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ (١٣٦:٤) (O People! Who lay claim to faith, profess faith in God and His Messenger, (4:136)).

The words فِي الْجِهَادِ (about *jihād*) or فِي الْقِتَالِ (about *qitāl*) are suppressed after لَوْلَا نَزَّلْتُ سُورَةَ. It is very common in the Qur’ān that if something is to be mentioned in detail later, it is initially mentioned rather concisely. An example of this style can be seen in verse thirty six of this *sūrah*. This style is also adopted while citing questions posed by people. I have explained it under the following verse of Sūrah Baqarah: يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَهْلِ (٢:١٨٩). The implied meaning is that first these people fervently demanded that why is not a clear directive regarding *jihād* revealed; however, when such a directive was revealed and that too in explicit terms, these claimants to faith began hiding here and there.

The word سُورَةٌ like the word كِتَابٌ has been used in the Qur’ān for a *sūrah* of the Qur’ān as well as a directive. Here both meanings can be implied. The adjective مُحْكَمَةٌ which qualifies it shows its certainty and such clarity that requires no explanation. In other words, neither is there any vagueness in it nor does it require any elucidation and nor is it from among the matters of the *mutashābihāt* so that only God knows its exact reality.

The word رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ refers to hypocrisy as well as the malice and envy these Hypocrites had for Islam and the Prophet (sws). In verses twenty nine and thirty seven, an explanation of this is

21. And those who have professed faith say: “Why is not a *sūrah* [regarding *jihad*] revealed!” But when a clear *sūrah* was revealed and *jihad* was also mentioned in it, you see those inflicted with a malady in their hearts staring at you as though they are fainting away for fear of death. So pity be on them!

coming up. I have presented my research on this word in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Baqarah.

This portrayal of these Hypocrites is also found in Sūrah Nisā' in the following words:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ قِيلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوا أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَخْشَوْنَ النَّاسَ كَخَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَشَدَّ خَشْيَةً وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا لِمَ كَتَبْتَ عَلَيْنَا الْقِتَالَ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْتَنَا إِلَى أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ قُلْ مَتَاعُ الدُّنْيَا قَلِيلٌ وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّمَنِ اتَّقَى وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا (٧٧:٤)

Have you seen those who were told: "Lay down your arms; recite your prayers and pay *zakāh*." When they were ordered to fight, some of them feared people as much as they feared God or even more. "Lord," they said "why do You bid us fight? Could you not give us a brief respite?" Say: "Trifling are the pleasures of this life. Better is the life to come for those who would keep from evil. You shall not be wronged by as much as the husk of a date-stone." (4:77)

In other words, until the time Muslims were not directed to wage *jihād*, these people would put up a show of sincerity and selflessness by expressing their great zeal to undertake it; however, once this directive was given, they began fearing people more than God and went about hiding themselves.

The words فَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ express curse and hate. They have the same meaning as وَيْلٌ لَهُمْ. The implication is that when with their claim to faith they have also nurtured hypocrisy and cowardice in themselves, then the curse of God be on them.

طَاعَةٌ وَقَوْلٌ مَّعْرُوفٌ فَإِذَا عَزَمَ الْأَمْرُ فَلَوْ صَدَقُوا اللَّهَ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ (٢١)<sup>22</sup>

The verse says that the right attitude for them was to welcome this directive of *jihād* by the conventional words "we have listened and we obeyed," and then when its time come proven from their actions that they were true to the promise they made with God. Had they done this, it would have been better for them yet they adopted for themselves the path to doom.

The words طَاعَةٌ وَقَوْلٌ مَّعْرُوفٌ are in the place of *mubtadā'* and the *khavar*

22. For them, the best attitude was obedience and the customary word. So when the matter had been decided with certainty, then if they had been true to God, it would have been better for them.

is suppressed because of strong contextual indication and as a requisite of eloquence. I have been explaining at various places in this *tafsīr* that when the intention is to fully focus the attention of the addressee on the *mubtadā'*, the *khābar* is suppressed. The words قَوْلٌ مَّعْرُوفٌ refer to the expression سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا (we listened and we obeyed). It is this expression which is what is conventional and customary for God from His sincere people. The sincere and faithful people of God have always welcomed every directive of God and His messengers with these words and this was only befitting for them since they had laid claim to faith; however, what actually happened was that they were inflicted with the stupor of death as soon as they were directed to wage *jihād*.

The expression فَإِذَا عَزَمَ الْأَمْرُ means that the matter has been decided, and that it has been resolved to undertake some practical measure for it.

In other words, it would have been befitting for them to utter the conventional acknowledgement of سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا (we listened and we obeyed) once they were directed to wage *jihād*, and when the final decision to launch it was communicated to them by God and His Prophet (sws), they should have substantiated their words through practice. It needs to be kept in consideration that the directive given in verse four of this *sūrah* is not to undertake *jihād* but to prepare for it and to encourage the believers. The practical step to launch it came later.

The words فَلَوْ صَدَقُوا اللَّهَ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ imply that till now whatever they have done for the Messenger of God is merely making claims. The time to test this claim has just come. If they now practically demonstrate their commitment to this claim, then this will open the door to a lot of good for them; however, instead of adopting this way, they chose for themselves the path of cowardice.

فَهَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ أَنْ تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَتَقَطَّعُوا أَرْحَامَكُمْ (٢٢)<sup>23</sup>

The Hypocrites are not directly addressed in the previous verse in the comment made on them; however, in this verse, they are directly addressed. This change in style is meant to reinforce the exhortation done to them. The verse says that if they evade the calls of this message, then they will not be able to benefit themselves or give any to their nation and end up in spreading anarchy in the society and severing blood relationships – something which they were deeply involved in the age of *jāhiliyyah*. In other words, if this is what they want, they are free to choose any path for themselves and then witness its fate; however, if

23. Therefore, if you turned away, what else is expected from you than spreading disorder in the land and severing blood relationships.

instead of anarchy, they want real peace and justice and desire to strengthen their mutual relationships on the basis of brotherhood and affection, then the only way is to even go as far as to endanger their lives if needed to bolster and cement the cause of this religion – the religion which by uprooting polytheism and sectarian and tribal biases found in the age of *jāhiliyyah* is uniting all mankind on worshipping and showing obedience to God and on the ideology that all mankind is one family having a common ancestor.

Another reason for directly addressing these Hypocrites to counsel them was that among them was one group which wanted to strike a compromise with the disbelievers of the Quraysh. In Sūrah Baqarah, this group has been referred to and they are again mentioned in verse thirty five of this *sūrah*. These people would assure the Quraysh and the Jews that though they have joined the ranks of the Muslims, they will continue to follow them in some matters. In verse twenty six of this *sūrah*, this group is also mentioned. These people were successful to some extent in concealing this hypocritical policy of theirs till the phase of war had not arrived. However, once this phase arrived, the time for them to hide expired. They were not ready to wage war against the Quraysh and its allies and they could not remain among the Muslims if they tried to shun this war. Thus to conceal their hypocrisy they started to spread the notion that they do not desire bloodshed among brothers and that they wanted that the Muslims and the Quraysh and others make peace with one another and live amicably. This is the right way to live. If instead of adopting this path, war is waged then uncontrollable anarchy will ensue in the land. Because of this hypocritical policy of theirs, these people would call themselves reformers and peace-lovers. They tried their best that Muslims adopt this policy so that their own hypocrisy would remain hidden and the objective of the enemies of Islam is also achieved. While keeping this mentality of theirs in view, it is said in the verse under discussion that the path they have adopted for themselves and the path they want others to adopt as well is not the path of peace and reconciliation; it is like turning back to anarchy and killing one's fellow human beings –something which they had remained deeply engaged in.

The path of peace and brotherhood is that all should lead their lives as servants of one God and as the descendents of one Adam and adopt that way of life which is based on the ideology of oneness of God and oneness of the progenitor of mankind. It is this ideology which the Qur'ān is calling them to. This will not be achieved by keeping intact the ways of the *jāhiliyyah* period in which each tribe had a separate god and a separate ancestor. Here it needs to be kept in mind that the collective system of Islam is based on the ideology of oneness of God and on the

oneness of the progenitor of mankind. I have discussed this issue in detail in Sūrah Nisā’.

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ فَأَصَمَّهُمْ وَأَعَمَّى أَبْصَارَهُمْ (٢٣)<sup>24</sup>

The verse says that such people have been cursed by God. As a result of this curse, their ears have become deaf and their eyes have become blind. God showed them light and they were fully convinced that this light has been revealed by Him but they keep turning back to see the darkness of their age of *jāhiliyyah* and are desirous of going back to it. As a result of this ungrateful attitude, God has cursed them and taken away His light from them. As a further consequence of this, their ears have lost the ability to hear the truth and their eyes have lost the real vision to see the truth.

أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا (٢٤)<sup>25</sup>

The verse says that it is the Qur’ān which revives the hearts provided that these people had reflected on it; however, these worthless people never deliberate on it; as a result the rust which comes on hearts has in fact inflicted their hearts; so just as locks close doors, their hearts too have been closed because of this rust.

The word قُلُوب is used here as an indefinite noun to express hate and abhorrence. This usage can be seen in the following verse of Sūrah Nisā’: (٤٧:٤) (before We obliterate your faces and turn them backward, (4:47)). Here the word وُجُوهَا has been similarly used to express hate and abhorrence. In other words, so horrible and hateful are these hearts that the speaker does not even want to refer to them by identifying them.

The word أَقْفَالُهَا refers to those things which inflict the heart with a malady or plague it like rust. Such maladies are mentioned in this *sūrah* (see verses twenty and twenty nine) and are also mentioned in detail at other places. Love of life, fear of death, stinginess, cowardice, jealousy, hypocrisy and other similar things are some of their prominent components. If a person has political authority, then this can also inflict him with arrogance and conceit and as a natural consequence of this he becomes stone-hearted and callous. The remedy to these maladies is to listen and to understand the Qur’ān, as has been explained under verses twenty three and twenty four of Sūrah Anfāl. However, it is the Qur’ān

24. It is these people who have been cursed by God; thus He made their ears dumb and eyes blind.

25. Do they not ponder on the Qur’ān or are there locks upon their hearts?

which such people evade and dread the most; hence their treatment becomes impossible.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ارْتَدُّوا عَلَىٰ أَدْبَارِهِم مِّن بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْهُدَىٰ الشَّيْطَانُ سَوَّلَ لَهُمْ وَأَمْلَىٰ لَهُمْ (٢٥)<sup>26</sup>

The verse says that the attitude of these Hypocrites is akin to apostasy. They fully knew that what the Prophet (sws) was calling them to is the path of truth. Thus they came forward and accepted it but when they were faced with trials Satan deceived them and they were misled by him and God too gave them respite. The reason for this respite was that people who intentionally deviate from the path of truth to merely follow their base desires are given time and opportunity by God so that they can wander wherever they want to.

It is evident from other places of the Qur'ān also that hypocrisy is tantamount to apostasy. In Sūrah Mā'idah, while referring to these Hypocrites, it is said: يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَن يَرْتَدَّ مِنكُم عَن دِينِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ (٥٤:٥) (Believers! If any among you renounces his faith, God will soon replace them by others who love Him and are loved by Him, (5:54)).

The subject of the verb اَمْلَى is God. In the Qur'ān, this verb is used for Him only and its usage for Him only is appropriate. Its ascription towards Satan is not appropriate at all. If there is an indication present, the verb itself is sufficient to show who its subject is. There are numerous examples of this in the Qur'ān. Readers are advised to look up verse 110 of Sūrah Yūsuf.

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا لِلَّذِينَ كَرِهُوا مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ سَنُطِيعُكُمْ فِي بَعْضِ الْأَمْرِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِسْرَارَهُمْ (٢٦)<sup>27</sup>

God consigned these Hypocrites to Satan because even after being fully convinced of the truth they connived with the enemies of Islam who intensely abhorred the Book revealed by God. These Hypocrites assured them that in some matters they will keep siding with them. The words لِلَّذِينَ كَرِهُوا مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ refer to the leaders of the Quraysh and the Jews whose enmity with Islam was very evident but these Hypocrites would assure them that though they have joined the ranks of the Muslims yet this certainly does not mean that they have no relation left with these

26. Indeed, people who turned away once God's guidance was revealed to them were deceived by Satan and God gave them respite.

27. This happened because they said to those who detested what was revealed by God: They said: "We shall follow you in some affairs." And God knows this secret of theirs.

leaders; if hard times ensue, they will side with them and that in this matter they will not care about the happiness or sorrow of anyone. It is mentioned in Sūrah Ḥashr about these very Hypocrites that they would keep going to the Jews to assure them that if they are turned out, they too would go along with them and in this matter not care what anyone says: (لَئِنْ أُخْرِجْتُمْ لَخُرَجْتُمْ مَعَكُمْ وَلَا تُطِيعُ فِيكُمْ أَحَدًا أَبَدًا (٥٩: ١١) (if you are driven out, then we shall necessarily go out with you and we will not listen to anyone regarding you, (59:11)).

The word *إِسْرَارُهُمْ* in *وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِسْرَارَهُمْ* refers to this very connivance of theirs and this sentence is not merely a piece of information; it reflects threat and warning. The implication is that God is fully aware of these clandestine activities and soon their fate will become evident.

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا تَوَفَّتْهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَضْرِبُونَ وُجُوهَهُمْ وَأَدْبَارَهُمْ (٢٧)

The verse depicts the fate of these people: The punishment of those who conspire against Islam begins right from the time angels claim their souls; so these people should think that what will they do when the stern angels of God claim their souls by striking them on their mouths and their backs and no one will be able to help them.

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ اتَّبَعُوا مَا أَصْحَظَ اللَّهُ وَكَرِهُوا رِضْوَانَهُ فَأَحْبَطَ أَعْمَالَهُمْ (٢٨)

These people will reach this fate because all their efforts revolved around opposing God; they adopted all those ways which displeased God and stayed away from things that could please God. In retribution of this, angels will bring torment to them right from the time of their death and God will lay waste all their seemingly pious deeds they did while claiming to be adherents of Islam.

أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ أَنْ لَنْ يُخْرِجَ اللَّهُ أَضْعَانَهُمْ (٢٩)

This is another threat sounded to them: if they are conspiring and conniving against Islam, do they think that these acts of theirs will always remain hidden and God will never expose them? If this is what they think, then they are totally wrong. Time has now come that they be exposed so that everyone fully recognizes them and no one is deceived

28. So what will happen when the angels will claim their souls, striking their faces and their backs?

29. This will be because they followed what incurred the wrath of God and hated what pleased Him. So God brought their deeds to nothing.

30. Do these people in whose hearts is a malady think that God will never reveal their malice?

by them.

The word مَرَضٌ refers both to hypocrisy and to malice and jealousy which these Hypocrites had for Islam and the Muslims and because of which they were doing such evil things mentioned earlier. Hypocrisy in itself is a malady; however, this malady increases when jealousy and malice are added to it. The word أَضْغَان refers to this very jealousy and malice. The word أَضْغَان is a plural of ضِغْنٌ and means “malice”.

وَلَوْ نَشَاءُ لَأَرَيْنَاكُمُ فَلَعَرَفْتَهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ وَلَتَعْرِفَنَّهُمْ فِي لَحْنِ الْقَوْلِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ أَعْمَالَكُمْ (٣٠)<sup>31</sup>

The word لَحْنٌ also means *tawriyah* ie a person states something in a manner that it has a specific connotation in his heart yet he communicates a different meaning to others. The Hypocrites were very adept in this art. They would converse in a dubious manner so as to convince both Muslims and the disbelievers at the same time that their sympathies are with them.

The Hypocrites are threatened by addressing the Prophet (sws): it is not at all difficult for God to expose them so that the Prophet (sws) is able to recognize them by their distinctive marks that they are in fact Hypocrites. If the Almighty is not doing this, then this is His magnanimity and graciousness that He is concealing their sins; however, it is not difficult at all for the Prophet (sws) to identify them. He can easily recognize them through their double-meaning words, hesitant talk and dubious conversation.

In this very context, the words وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ أَعْمَالَكُمْ directly address the Hypocrites that if they are able to deceive Muslims through their dual and dubious words, then this is no success they should be proud of. God is fully aware of their deeds, and when He knows, what will be the benefit they gain from hiding it from others.

وَلَتَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ حَتَّى نَعْلَمَ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَتَبْلُوَ أَخْبَارَكُمْ (٣١)<sup>32</sup>

The verse says that the Almighty will necessarily test and try them through good and bad circumstances of various types until He is able to sift out those who adopt the path of *jihād* and perseverance from those who are mere claimers to this. The implication is that it is not the way of the Almighty to write on the forehead of every Hypocrite that he is a

31. And if We pleased, We would have them pointed out to you and you would recognize them by their looks. And you will surely know them from the hesitation of their words. And God has knowledge of your deeds.

32. And We shall definitely put you to test to distinguish the valiant and the resolute among you and test your circumstances.



Hypocrite; however, this much is His established and unassailable practice that He keeps distinguishing the good from the evil through various trials. Since this is a requisite of His established practice, they too will have to pass through this trial. As a result, those people will not be able to hide themselves for long who want to remain in the ranks of the Muslims.

A reflection on this verse shows that the real purpose of these trials is to pinpoint the fighters for the cause of God and those who persevere; however, as a natural consequence of this those people too will be detected who through deception are desirous to be counted as Muslims. The words *وَنَبَلُّوْا أَخْبَارَكُمْ* refer to this. The word *أَخْبَار* refers to their circumstances. This, in other words, can be understood that God tests people to sift out the good among them; however, the consequence is that the evil-doers are also identified.

Since this trial is a requisite of God's established practice, it has been mentioned in an emphatic way by employing the assertive particle *lām*. The verb *عَلِمَ* here means to sift out and to discern, as explained at an appropriate place in this *tafsīr*.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَشَاقُّوا الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْهُدَىٰ لَنْ يَضُرُّوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَيُخِيطُ أَعْمَالُهُمْ (٣٢)<sup>33</sup>

Here, at the end, the *sūrah* turns to the same topic with which it began and the purpose, as shall become evident from the coming verses, is to warn the Hypocrites that the opposition shown by the disbelievers to God and His Messenger will be of no avail. They will not be able to harm them; in fact, they themselves will be humiliated. All their efforts will end up in vain in this world and in the Hereafter too they will be doomed. So the Hypocrites must not ruin their Herein and the Hereafter by following the ways of the disbelievers and should obey God and His Messenger with full devotion; if they do not show weakness, God will make them succeed and humiliate these enemies.

The words *إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ* show that the Quraysh and their allies are implied here as the disbelievers. Verse one also mentions them by these words. The words *وَشَاقُّوا الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْهُدَىٰ* throw further light on them: they are fully convinced that what the Messenger of God is calling them to is the truth; however, they are adamant in opposing it merely in conceit of their leadership. This opposition of

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33. Those who disbelieved and debarred others from the path of God and opposed the Messenger after they had been clearly guided shall in no way harm God. And God will bring their deeds to nothing.

theirs will not be able to harm the religion of God in any way; however, they will doom their own selves. In other words, if they are opposing the Messenger of God in spite of being convinced that he is His Messenger and are fully convinced that what he is calling them towards is the truth, then how long will their artificial verve help them? They will be humiliated at last.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَلَا تُبْطِلُوا أَعْمَالَكُمْ (٣٣)<sup>34</sup>

Though the address is general, it is evident from its style that it is specially directed towards weak Muslims who are under discussion in the previous verses. The verse says: “O People who have professed faith! It is an essential requirement of your faith that you obey God and His Prophet (sws).” It is evident from contextual indication that the verb أَطِيعُوا is in its complete and thorough meaning. Thus its true implication would be that people in all circumstances while keeping above vested interests should obey God and His Messenger.

The words لَا تُبْطِلُوا أَعْمَالَكُمْ imply that through this obedience only their deeds will bear fruit; if this obedience is kept subservient to their vested interests all their deeds will end up in vain even though they be religious in nature. Only that faith is acceptable to God which is in accordance with His terms. The religiosity of those who want to profess faith as per their own terms and obey its dictates as far as it suits their interests will not be totally discarded; so they should not let their deeds turn to nothing by adopting these ways!

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ مَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ فَلَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ (٣٤)<sup>35</sup>

The implication of this verse is that God will never forgive these disbelievers who adopted the path of disbelief themselves and also stopped others from treading the path leading to God and then died while remaining adamant on this disbelief. In other words, the same fate will be met by people who will seek their support and conspire to keep their friendship intact with them.

فَلَا تَهِنُوا وَتَدْعُوا إِلَى السَّلَامِ وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ وَاللَّهُ مَعَكُمْ وَلَنْ يَتَرَكُمُ أَعْمَالَكُمْ (٣٥)<sup>36</sup>

34. Believers! Obey God and obey the Messenger, and do not let your labours come to nothing.

35. Indeed, those who disbelieved and debarred others from the path of God and died in this state, God shall never forgive them.

36. So do not be feeble and call for a compromise and you will remain

The word سَلَم means “peace and reconciliation”. I have mentioned earlier while explaining verses twenty two and twenty three that since these Hypocrites do not have the courage to fight, they would keep talking about peace and reconciliation. They would advise the Muslims as well as the Quraysh to make peace between one another and not engage in war. They would present themselves as a group inclined to peace and would give the impression to people that it is this policy which is in the interest of the country otherwise a brother will spill the blood of his brother and the whole body of the nation will be dismembered. This policy of theirs was totally founded on their cowardice and vested interests; but they would call people to it in the garb of peace and amity. This would impress people having inclination towards hypocrisy and this verse actually exposes this weakness of theirs: they should not become proponents of peace and reconciliation by hiding behind the veil of cowardice; they should come forward to wage *jihād* with faith and courage. If they do so, then they will necessarily succeed and their enemies will be humbled and humiliated; God is with them and when He is with them, then His help will be with them at every step; they should also rest assured that God will never be insincere and untruthful to His promises to them regarding the recompense of their deeds; He will fully reward each and every deed of theirs whether big or small.

The linguistic style found in فَلَا تَهِنُوا وَتَدْعُوا إِلَى السَّلَامِ is the same as the one explained in the following verse of Sūrah Baqarah: وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٤٢:٢) (do not confound truth with falsehood, nor knowingly conceal the truth, (2:42)). There is no need to repeat the particle of negation لَا when both parts of a conjugate clause express the same reality. Same is the case in the verse under discussion. Since this call to peace was the result of the cowardice of these Hypocrites the word تَدْعُوا is conjugated with فَلَا تَهِنُوا and the particle of negation لَا was suppressed so that it becomes evident from the very style of the discourse that this call to peace is not because they are peace-loving but because this is an unsuccessful attempt to hide their cowardice.

The expression وَتَرَىٰ حَقَّهُ means: “he was dishonest in the rights of a person.” The words وَلَنْ يَزِيدَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ mean that people should not be afraid that God will be insincere or untruthful to them regarding the reward of their deeds; on the contrary, He will richly reward them. When each deed shall be fully and duly rewarded, then there is no reason to desist from sacrifices for His cause.

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dominant and God is on your side and will not show any dishonesty with you in your deeds.

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إِنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُوَ وَإِنْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا يُؤْتِكُمْ أَجْرَكُمْ وَلَا يَسْأَلْكُمْ  
أَمْوَالَكُمْ (٣٦)<sup>37</sup>

The verse says that people should not desist from sacrificing their life and wealth for the cause of God by being lured away by the love of this world. If the wealth and resources of this life have any value, then it is only this much that a person uses them to earn for the Hereafter. If a person was not able to use his life in this manner, then this will mean that he spent his life as a slave to his desires and it would turn out to be meaningless for him. They should rest assured that if they lead a life of faith and virtue and spend their wealth for the cause of God, then this is not a non-lucrative deal; in fact, God will richly reward all their deeds and instead of the meagre and paltry riches of this life they will be blessed with an eternal kingdom.

The word *إِحْفَاءٌ* is suppressed after *وَلَا يَسْأَلْكُمْ أَمْوَالَكُمْ* as is evident from the next verse. Briefly stating something before explaining it is a common style of the Qur'ān. For this very reason, questions are cited in the Qur'ān in a very brief and concise manner so that the answer itself can explain the brevity. The word *إِحْفَاءٌ* means to take something completely and totally or to demand something insistently. These words actually sound an assurance to these spineless people that God will not put them through the test of demanding all their wealth; He will only demand a part of it and in this too He will richly recompense them. So they should not be afraid of spending in His cause and also not feel pushed at His calls to spend in His way.

إِنْ يَسْأَلْكُمْوهَا فَيُحْفِفْكُمْ تَبَخَّلُوا وَيُخْرِجْ أَضْعَانَكُمْ (٣٧)<sup>38</sup>

The implication of this verse is that the Almighty will not demand all of their wealth because if He does they will be fully exposed as they will necessarily show stinginess, and in this way the malice and jealousy they hide in their hearts against Islam and the Muslims will become known. In verse twenty nine above, these very Hypocrites were threatened that they should not be deceived by the fact that the Almighty will conceal their malice and jealousy forever. He by putting them into any trial can expose them. This thing is stated here from another aspect that had God

37. The life of this world is but a sport and entertainment. And if you profess faith and be pious, God will reward you and will not ask for all your wealth.

38. And if He demands and demands all, you would show stinginess and this would reveal your malice.



them. These Hypocrites are very soft to the disbelievers: they seek friendship from them and they – the disbelievers – are using them for their interest against Islam and the Muslims. On the contrary, these new people will be very affectionate and gracious for the believers, but if the disbelievers will try to dent them or use them for their own interest, they will find the believers to be like a rock solid wall. With the grace and blessings of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah's tafsīr*. فالحمد لله على ذلك (so gratitude be to God for this).

Raḥmānabād

9<sup>th</sup> September 1976 AD

13<sup>th</sup> Ramaḍān al-Mubārak 1396 AH

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